

Organisational Innovation

Andrew Walsh

Kerry Lonergan:

Our second speaker today is Andrew Walsh. Organisations such as natural resource management agencies have an important role to play in informing policy and in effecting on-the-ground natural resource and animal welfare management transformation. Natural resource management has undergone a significant restructure in New South Wales in recent times. The Local Land Service agencies have become the lead agencies bringing together agricultural production service, natural resource management and biosecurity into one, single organisation.

Andrew is Team Leader, Sustainable Agriculture, with New South Wales Northern Tablelands Local Land Service Agency, which has recently signed an agreement with the ALM Group to trial and evaluate CLM on the Northern Tablelands. So Andrew is going to discuss the changes to natural resource management and agricultural services in New South Wales, the potential of CLM as a useful integrating tool and as a vehicle to garner landholder support. Take it away Andrew.

Andrew Walsh:

Thank you. To give a bit of background, Local Land Services has been formed to become a one-stop shop for farmers in New South Wales, and it's basically the Livestock Health and Pest Authority, the former Catchment Management Authorities and the advisory functions of the Department of Primary Industries.

“Local Land Services—a one-stop shop for farmers in New South Wales.”

I guess the benefits behind that were for the combining of administration costs—so cost savings there, improving the cooperation of these, what we call, the four pillars of our organisation: so agriculture advice, plant and animal biosecurity, natural resource management, and emergency management. As you can see, there's 11 local land and service regions in New South Wales and they've all been formed based around the Council boundaries as well. So where I'm from, Northern Tablelands...God's country.

There are positions that provide advisory extension services linked to the latest research. The main function of the former LHPA was the biosecurity operational plan. Basically, the four main sections of these plans: prevention, eradication, containing, and minimisation. Another large section which really only comes into when there is an emergency, like the 2011 and 2013 floods through Northern New South Wales—we provide vital support services in conjunction with the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries under the State Emergency Management Plan.

The Natural Resource section is what used to be the main business of the CMAs The Natural Resources Commission in New South Wales established a standard for quality in natural resource management to improve the consistency of practice based on the adaptive management approach. The standard is designed to apply to natural resource management at all scales, including state, regional, catchment, local and property levels.

Why we decided to do a pilot of the certification is that originally, once we all go back to the four pillars, we have greater cooperation amongst our fellow workmates that we could see

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that if people had, or landholders or enterprises had some sort of certification they'd be a lower risk profile for biosecurity, and we could see value in the increase in NRM participation. So essentially, we were doing ourselves out of a job. That's what we'd like to see, that landholders take on that responsibility and we sort of were generating less work for ourselves, if you sort of know what I mean. What the carrot for people to, we thought originally to start doing these sorts of programs was the potential in a reduced rating system on the land. To just sort of cover those costs.

“If landholders had some sort of certification they'd be a lower risk profile for biosecurity, and we could see value in the increase in NRM participation...and potential in a reduced rating system...to cover those costs...and CLM as a regional branding opportunity.”

Over the last couple of months, in talking with Tony and his troop, we're sort of now trying to work out what other advantages there are. So we're looking at the connection with our farm planning system—which I'll show you on the next slide. There's an opportunity—our Board's quite keen on a regional branding opportunity. So Northern Tablelands beef is sustainable. Let's go out and push that. Instead of individual landholders doing it, selling it to...Mudgee Lamb going down and selling Styrofoam boxes of cut lamb to Sydney and markets like that, we could use that as a market driver. And then we started to recently look into the potential of the Local Land Services' or government bodies' involvement in the certification or the auditing process just to relieve some of the monetary pressure, which might be some of the barriers of adoption in these sorts of systems.

This slide probably is the basis of our farm planning course. And my colleague, Iestyn Taylor down there, is our farm planner. If you've got any questions, go and ask Iestyn.

So basically, we figure if you look after all these sections of your farming business—so you've got your physical, your soil nutrition, shade, shelter, diversity, green/dry matter and ground cover. If you're looking after all those, and continually improving all those factors, then you'll be able to better manage your debt, you're going to have happy people, you're going to hopefully make some money. If any slices of that pie start to go backwards, everything starts to get affected. So it's a whole integrated system and you can probably see a lot of those things being tied into a certification sort of process as well.

Just to finish off, we've been working on some of the drivers and benefits that we can sort of see at a state and national, federal, worldwide level, at a regional level and probably more importantly for us the individual landholder levels, where our biggest influence is. For us, you can see there's less biosecurity risk in healthier catchments at a state and national level if it's widely adopted. For the individual there's hopefully increased profit and the social rewards that we've sort of all been touching on in a lot of the presentations. That sort of 'feel good', not doing it for a monetary value but sort of leading your community.

One thing that we have started to talk about in, I guess, they've touched on the federal and state investment into natural resource management. And we can see that if we can, I guess—I'll need a pointer here—but if we can increase our outputs to our investors (State and Federal Government and private industry), if we can increase and report on our outputs through healthier catchments then hopefully it will lead into increased funding back into the region because it's seen as a region to invest in. And then that will flow back into the landholders and it's sort of a cycle, you want people to come back to you and say you've got a good system, you've got a good product, we want to invest in your area, and it comes back into the landholders and it just keeps generating itself.

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So this is a diagram, it's a work in progress; we've only just started to really flesh it out. Obviously, you can get a lot more complicated, but we're really looking forward to seeing what this whole certification process can do for us. And yeah, I guess, watch this space.